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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

40¢

VOL. 7 NO. 2
SECOND ISSUE OF
JANUARY 1977
Issue # 146

- AMTRAK'S STEAM EXCURSION
- THE EMERGING CORRIDORS
- CASE FOR THE "GULF WIND"

ON THE COVER:

The Amtrak Freedom Train. The 4449-powered excursion train pauses at Valdosta, Georgia on Jan 15. See Ken Maylath's article starting on page 11. Photo by Ken Maylath.

LETTERS

I was on the FLORIDIAN that derailed near Birmingham Jan 16, but I survived with no injuries. My car turned over and slid down an embankment. Quite a lot of noise and bouncing around. I think these new SDP40F engines are too heavy for the track. The FLORIDIAN has been involved in three major wrecks at Birmingham, Pulaski and Dyersburg in approximately a year. Trains used to be noted for their safety.

L. T. Muse
Nashville, Tennessee

I have ridden the SDP40F engines and I have had that sort of ride only on a roller coaster. The pitch and yaw and lateral slamming that the crew men and rails take are very scarey indeed. The slamming back and forth at any speed above 45mph is, to say the least, tiring to the crews. One trip I was on was Amtrak train 6 from Denver to McCook, Nebraska. The fireman on that trip refused to sit in his seat, preferring to stand between the engineer and fireman's aide, "to save his kidneys."

Roger L. Robertson
Aurora, Colorado

The FLORIDIAN operates over the most inefficient route ever used in Florida service, going nowhere over much of the route, making no useful connections with any other rail service, and wasting public money at a scandalous rate. Continued operation of such an advertisement of ineptitude can only do serious damage to the future of Amtrak.

Robert T. Clark
Sanford, Florida

I read with interest reader Aberbach's letter and your Editor's comment in the Second December issue concerning the Amtrak deficit.

I strongly feel that the area of deficit that deserves public attention is employee productivity. I have yet to see a strong voice raised for the need for drastic revision in labor contracts and work rules... In the past year I have ridden on just about every Amtrak route, and find the overall productivity levels and work hours distressingly low. I did an in-depth analysis on the INTER-AMERICAN, and I feel that renegotitated labor agreements could save approximately half. Examples would be a 3-man train crew that boards in Poplar Bluff, rides four hours to St. Louis, gets off, lays over 23 hours and rides four hours back with no intermediate stops. A 4-hour "work day." Shouldn't this crew have boarded in Little Rock and ridden 8 hours each day? Another crew did board in Little Rock and rode to Poplar Bluff. Does the taxpayer really want to subsidize 4-hour days? It takes two man-days to operate the baggage car from Little Rock to St. Louis, but baggage is handled only at Poplar Bluff, a 10-minute stop. Airlines have mastered the ground crew handling baggage, even at the smallest station; why not Amtrak?

(continued on page 22)

Rail Travel News, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Whole No. 146). Second Issue of January, 1977.
Copyright © 1977 by Message Media.
Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $9.00 per year; single copy 40¢.
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A LAST TRY TO CUT AMTRAK'S BUDGET

In the last days of the Ford administration a budget for Fiscal 78, starting next Oct 1, was submitted to Congress (on Jan 17), and it called for big cutbacks in funds for transportation. Amtrak, the customary whipping boy of Coleman's DOT, would under the proposed budget receive only one-third of the capital grants it asked for--$127 million, a figure that is 9% less than the current fiscal year. Amtrak's operating subsidy would increase by an insignificant amount, not enough to offset increases brought on by inflation: $490 million ascompared to $483.6 million in the current year. Amtrak had requested an increase of $44 million over its last budget.

Despite the proposed Amtrak cuts, the transportation budget proposed by the lame duck administration would increase money for highway building by 18%, for airport improvement by 78%, and would maintain existing levels of support for air traffic systems operation. Mass transit assistance would increase 16% and there would be a 73% increase for new railroad assistance projects.

The $127 million capital grants for Amtrak would include $25 million for rebuilding the Northeast Corridor and $25 million for existing debt. Amtrak said that this figure wouldn't provide enough money for purchasing the new equipment it has planned, and also indicated that some routes might have to be dropped in the wake of the proposed cut in its operating budget.

The Carter administration is said to favor increasing the capital grants budget, tho it might attempt to make Amtrak live within the Ford operating budget by initiating more cost reductions. The new administration also reportedly would like to increase the mass transit budget above that proposed by the old administration.

AMTRAK TALKS ABOUT ITS BAD WINTER

A letter from Amtrak President Paul Reistrup to all Amtrak employees, dated Jan 21, was published late last month, in which Reistrup called this winter "one of the most serious periods in Amtrak history." Reistrup expressed empathy with Amtrak employees for the problems they have had to face and urged them to continue to bear up under the difficult conditions, which are now improving. It was the first time in Amtrak's 5½-year history that the corporation had to suspend service on several routes in order to provide enough equipment to continue operating its more heavily patronized routes. On Jan 19 Amtrak had suspended service on eight of its more lightly patronized runs.

A number of observers have expressed dismay that the "all-weather transportation", the passenger train, should have to cut back while airlines and buses were still managing to get thru. It was pointed out, however, that this winter was the coldest on record East of the Rockies, and that most Amtrak equipment is rather old. Amtrak's new electrically-heated cars suffered few problems, while the older, steam-heated cars had frozen water pipes that put them out of service. Amtrak pointed out that its cars must remain outdoors, while airliners and most buses are stroed indoors under shelter. An Amtrak spokesman also noted that the railroads must cope with their snow removal problems with no public help, while the highways and airports have state and federal assistance to keep them clear. No Greyhound snowplows were seen on the highways, and no airline snowplows were noted at the airports.

A DERAILMENT OF THE NIGHT OWL

The northbound Amtrak NIGHT OWL suffered a minor derailment on Feb 2. The train was approaching the Old Saybrook CT station at 9:45am, when the last five of its seven cars went off the tracks. The train was traveling at a low speed, and there were no injuries reported. Locomotive 954, an E8 unit, the baggage car and the sleeper remained on the tracks. The 58 passengers aboard were bused to their destinations.

Rail Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS has applied to the CTC for permission to increase passenger fares effective Feb 1. Red, white & blue fares will be increased by 8%, 6% and 4% respectively with some smaller upward adjustments between Montreal and Halifax, Montreal and Moncton, Toronto and Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Vancouver, and Edmonton and Vancouver. Shorthaul lower berth charges will go up by up to 10% but will remain unchanged beyond 1000 miles. Upper berths will increase 10% while roomettes and bedrooms remain virtually unchanged. Summer premium on sleeping car fares will be 10%. Dayniter charges will go from the present $4-13 range to $5-16 range. Discounts for groups of 15-34 passengers will remain 10% and for 35 or more 15%, but 20% discount for groups of 70 or more will be cancelled. Corridor sleeper fares will be: upper $10, lower $15, roomette $20, bedroom $35. Club car fares, with meals will increase by $1. There will be no change in Southwestern Ontario Tempo Club charges (without meals). Dayniter fares will be increased in the Corridor from $4 to $5. The last CN fare increase was one year ago, in Feb 1976.

THE BRIGHTER SIDE of CN fares is the announcement that one-day excursion fares presently valid only to Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec will be expanded to apply between all Corridor stations where the one-day roundtrip fare is $4 or more.

THE TWO LARGEST Canadian airlines, Air Canada and CP Air announced Jan 18 that they will seek fare increases of up to 7% effective Mar 1 to meet inflationary costs.

TWELVE-VOLUME REPORT issued late last year, commissioned by the federal government and the former Social Credit administration of Alberta, claims that passenger trains will fall well behind air and bus in the Calgary-Edmonton route. The present Conservative government's policy is to maintain rail service, and is in opposition to the study just published. A suggestion in the Edmonton city council was to press the federal government to upgrade tracks between the two major Alberta cities to provide an eventual 2-hour rail trip.

THE "ROYAL HUDSON" steam engine will make a 5-week tour of the U.S., including most of the month of April (coinciding with Amtrak's April steam excursion). The announcement came from B. C. Tourism Minister Grace McCarthy in late January. The ex-CP locomotive, run by B. C. Railway, is expected to return to Vancouver to resume day tours to Squamish by the mid-May Victoria Day weekend.

CANADIAN NATIONAL HAS taken responsibility for operation of the "Princess of Acadia" from CP Rail. The 159-auto ferry was built in the early 1970s for the Bay of Fundy crossing between Saint John, N.B. and Digby, N.S. Schedules and fares remain unchanged. This means a CN operation between two CP Rail passenger runs--the ATLANTIC LIMITED from Montreal to Saint John and the DOMINION ATLANTIC between Digby and other N.S. points, including Halifax.

STEAMSHIP "PRINCESS MARGUERITE" recently appeared briefly on the "Wonderful World of Disney" TV program--with a story line concerning two children visiting with a relative on a remote part of Vancouver Island, north of Victoria.

PRESIDENT ROBERT BANDEEN of CN Railways said Jan 17 that preliminary reports indicate that significant parts of CN made a profit in 1976 for the first time in 20 years. The sale of CN stock to the public is being considered by the government.

A RAIL-CAR CARRIER built for a CP Rail subsidiary but never delivered to CP will soon cruise the St. Lawrence River for CN. The "Incan St. Laurent," built at Vancouver B.C. and used occasionally to ferry railcars to Alaska, will move east early in 1977, according to a recent CN announcement.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Coach derails. One hundred forty-nine injured. Amtrak delayed 10 hours. Passengers sent on by bus. You've seen the headlines, you've read the stories. But until you have actually ridden the rails of America, you cannot know how emotionally painful it is to ride Amtrak."

--Charles Bricker in San Jose (CA) Sunday Mercury News, Jan 23.

AN AMTRAK WINTER DIARY

by Carl H. Fowler

JANUARY 10: Sadly, the comments in RTN in the matter of the BN's embargo on SDP-40F locomotives barely touch the tip of the iceberg. The edict has been no less than a catastrophe.

Item: No eastbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR since Dec 19, excepting one run, has arrived in Chicago in time to make the 2:30pm connection with the RILEY-MOUNTAINEER. Almost no SFZ has arrived in time for the 3:30pm BROADWAY and nearly 50% have missed the 6:10pm PANAMA. All of these passengers have cost Amtrak sizeable sums for alternate transportation and lodging.

Item: The SFZ was cancelled westbound a second time because of ancient E8 steam generator failure, this time at Creston IA. The consist was ferried into Denver 17½ hours late and resulted in an eastbound annulment from San Francisco to Denver as a result.

Item: P30 engines are not the prime movers on BN for the SFZ. The Jan 6 arrival in Denver from Chicago was powered by GE unit 720 on the point, but was followed by leased UP E unit 960A and 973B and Amtrak B unit 452. This train was a mere 2 hrs late into Denver (the best in 3 weeks). These units were placed on an on-time eastbound No. 6, but had the train over 4 hrs late at Omaha returning East.

Item: Passengers on the SFZ arriving Denver Jan 6, 7 and 8 all complained of being repeatedly side-tracked for BN freights.

Item: The massive delays imposed nightly by BN on the eastbound SFZ out of Denver that invariably arrives on-time from SP/UP points, have caused an average 30-minute to 2-hour delays in getting No. 5 out of Chicago the next day, due to power shortages.

Item: BN claims cold weather as the cause of delays. For 30 years CB&Q, NP and GN trains with diesels encountered no such delays due to cold. Last winter's SDP40F performance was model. The BN is deliberately delaying these trains. The NORTH COAST HIAWATHA of Jan 9 was reported on time at Missoula, but almost 5 hrs late by Fargo. This pattern repeats every trip. No Northern transcontinental has made any Chicago connection before 6pm in over 3 weeks.

A call to Amtrak headquarters produced an Adequacy of Service Rep who flatly claimed that all delays were due to bad weather. The Denver papers have carried a series of articles on SFZ delays, all blaming old equipment and none mentioning BN. A call to NARP produced the thought that Amtrak might go to court. Something less has certainly failed, and the corporation is getting terrible P.R. for a situation it did not create.

If BN cannot be dealt with, the SFZ should be temporarily re-routed over UP-Milw east of Denver and NORTH COAST schedules returned to the slower pre-Oct 31 levels, so that at least a modicum of on-time performance can be restored.

JANUARY 12: Talked with an Amtrak Public Affairs spokesman in Washington. The C&O derailments involving both E units and SDP40Fs have been charged up by the FRA to bad track on the C&O's New River Subdivision, and the FRA has imposed a 30mph speed limit on that section, causing delays to the RILEY. It was delayed an average of over 3 hrs between Charlottesville and Cincinnati throughout the holidays. No. 51 has been getting into Chicago regularly after 6:30pm. The eastbound RILEY-MOUNTAINEER has been on time on N&W points, but horribly late into Washington on the C&O. Amtrak is leasing Southern Railway F units for this train.

Amtrak has not gone to court with BN but is trying to negotiate with the railroad. Today's No. 5 came into Denver after 3pm. Train 6 was 2 hrs, 20 mins down at Osceola IA, but had been on time last night at Denver. Worse, train 10 left Billings 15 mins late, but was over 5 hrs off today at Fargo. Amtrak is absorbing astronomical costs for alternate transportation and lodging in Chicago. Who can estimate the hidden eventual cost of thousands of travelers who will never ride Amtrak again?

The BN is again accepting SDP40Fs, but with the 50mph speed limit in effect on curves. No plans are impending to slow up BN or C&O schedules. I appreciate Amtrak's desire not to concede on schedules, but it is vital that something be done about connections in Chicago.

BN President Menk joined in the unanimous vote of the Amtrak Board to buy the line's 150 SDP40F engines. There have been 13 SDP40F derailments on Amtrak, but the engines have run 75,000,000 safe miles and have a record far superior to almost any other class of engine. Most of these derailments are clearly track-related.

Ironically, Amtrak unintentionally helped trigger the problem. After the Dec 16 Omaha derailment, Amtrak sent a telegram to member roads advising them to slow SDP-40Fs to 50mph on curves over 2° on questionably maintained track. Evidently the BN doesn't trust its entire railroad, as it outright banned the engines. SP imposed the 50mph limit, but its schedules are already so padded that no serious delays followed. Even the ICG left schedules alone. Also, the telegram only referred to questionable curves. Remember it was the C&O that first complained about SDP40F engines, but it is C&O whose track has now been cited by both FRA and the National Transportation Safety Board.

It has been tremendously cold in the Midwest, but the sheer volume of delays can not be charged to cold alone.

JANUARY 15: The BN is still not running SDP40Fs on the SFZ out of Denver. The Jan 14 train 6 came into Denver 20mins late behind one SDP40F and a P30. The P30 did not go thru east of Denver. The minor delay on UP had been caused by a broken rail on SP east of Colfax CA, and UP had made up over an hour since Ogden, but all that was to be lost on the BN. In Denver a P30, a UP B unit and an E A unit lettered for the "Preamble Express" of the Freedom Train were added. By Osceola this morning No. 6 was over 3¼ hrs late.

No. 5 arrived in Denver on Jan 15 after 3:45pm. The No. 5 departure today from Chicago was after 7:45pm. A call tonight to the L.A. Reservations Bureau produced this sad picture: No. 10, which had been reported on time at Missoula, was 3 hrs late at Livingston. No. 7 left Glasgow 4 hrs, 45 mins late--later as a bus, the train cancelled at Havre due to a BN freight derailment. The No. 5 that had been out of Chicago 1:45 late was now off over 2 hrs. L.A. clerks have been told to quote no connections at Chicago for BN trains.

Coleman's report again hits Amtrak, demands massive cuts in routes. Who can forget BN President Menk's comparison of the passenger train to the stagecoach as a dead conveyance? A call to the DOT produced a firm "no comment" on any possible DOT aid to Amtrak in enforcing Federal law on passenger service.

Passengers on the No. 5 of Jan 14 continued to report freight-caused delays. An Amtrak spokesman thought BN had imposed no restrictions on E units, but BN crews displayed a fat packet of slow orders for the P30 and E-equipped No. 6 of Jan 14.

(The UP Stock Show Special from Cheyenne, usually pulled by 8444, came into Denver today behind freshly painted E units, as the ICC is late in re-certifying the 8444 boilers. UP says the 4-8-4 will be back, but for now it can't legally run.)

JANUARY 17: For the third time in a month, the SFZ has been annulled completely. The Jan 16 No. 5 was cut at Chicago, after some sort of single-car derailment in the Chicago yards. Details are sketchy. No attempt was made to assemble a substitute consist (presumably the cars in the yards were too cold) and another SFZ is scratched. The Chicago yard seems as inept at dispatching and cold-weather fighting as the BN is at actually moving trains. No SFZ has departed Chicago on time for weeks, either due to no engines or frozen cars. The car problem is inexcusable, after a full month to adapt to the cold, as the SFZ consist has an over-24-hour layover for any defects to be attended to.

The cold spread further east and south yesterday, reaching 1° in Atlanta, -18° in Indianapolis and -21° in Dayton. At these extremes the on-time performance

debacle spread off BN. The BROADWAY LIMITED left Pittsburgh over 5 hrs late at 7:02am. The westbound RILEY was 3 hrs, 47 mins off--a "normal" delay for it, with the 30mph slow order on the entire New River Subdivision of the C&O. The northbound PANAMA LIMITED was 4 hrs late out of Centralia. The NORTH COAST HIAWATHA of Jan 14, that was over 8 hrs late off BN into Minneapolis, was over 12 hrs late at Glenview, and was still not into Chicago at 8:45am today. This train went thru minus 20°-minus 35° weather for almost a thousand miles, and joins the cancelled SFZs in the unbelievably-late-delay group. However, the Santa Fe, encountering the same awful cold from western Kansas on, was only 15 mins late at La Plata (LONE STAR) and expected on time at Chicago. At least one railroad can still run Amtrak's trains on time.

The record-breaking cold gives ConRail, C&O, ICG, and BN an excuse for the foul-ups of Jan 16 & 17, but the sad fact is that on-time operation has been fading fast since mid-December, and the BN's continued insistence on the use of worn-out 30-yr old engines on its lines remains an ominous precedent. And still there is no public word from Amtrak on the debacle.

The rail corporation now apparently intends to shift Chicago hotel costs onto passengers by claiming that clearly advertised connections do not exist and that it is essentially not possible to make a genuinely long distance trip by rail. NARBO and Secretary Coleman must be delighted.

JANUARY 18: The disaster has spread off BN and this time Amtrak is in trouble nationwide. Train 31 has been annulled for Jan 16, 17 and 18. No. 30 was over 3 hrs late at Pittsburgh on the 18th, but was running. The Jan 17 westbound BROADWAY was 2 hrs 40 mins late at Harrisburg, but was marked 8½ hrs late into Chicago. The eastbound BROADWAY of the 16th was 24 hours late at New York (L.A. office wasn't sure whether this was the #41 of Jan 15 or 16 out of Chicago).

If anything, things were better on the BN. No. 5 was out of Chicago at 11:52pm on the 17th, held up by frozen steam lines and ice on the rails, but at least it ran. BN, of course, continued to lose time, but that late it could hardly be blamed for the post-10am Omaha report. No. 6 was in Denver on time as usual, but off "only" 3 hrs 7 mins at Omaha. The No. 10 of Jan 17 was 90 mins late at Butte with the monster cold belt ahead. L.A. had a report that both #10 and #8 are to be detoured, but had no information on what kind of detour.

The real horror today is complete "until further notice" cancellations. Besides #5 on the 16th, the post-derailment FLORIDIAN and #31, L.A. received a list of 16 trains off indefinitely (see last issue). All baggage service is annulled on the BROADWAY LIMITED. First class service on the RILEY-MOUNTAINEER is gone. The train is being at least temporarily Amfleeted to better take the cold thru electric heat. Three different L.A. clerks were worried about massive lay-offs and a rumor is circulating that the annulled trains may not be restored. That seems unlikely, but staff morale is dropping like the temperature. A Chicago ticket agent reports that pipes have been breaking in the yards and icing over the rails. The minor derailment that caused the cancellation of #5 on the 16th was ice-caused.

Even in California problems have cropped up. Someone decided the day after Christmas to routinely service SAN DIEGAN Amfleet cars, and consists were cut on at least two from 7 to 4 cars. Several hundred passengers were turned away, as a result, on a day that is always a peak travel date.

Somehow Santa Fe can still get trains thru the ice box. Train 3 of the 17th at Chicago was only 39 mins late at Lamy. No. 4 into Chicago on the 18th arrived 28 mins late. What do Santa Fe and its Chicago yard crews (to the extent they are still used) know that the other operating roads do not? Could it be will power?

RESULTS OF RTN'S FOURTH READER TRAIN RATING SURVEY will be published in our next issue. In the meantime you can continue sending in your ratings, using the format previously published, and they will automatically be placed in the next survey, which will cover trains ridden between Jan 1, 1977 and Jun 30, 1977. More rating forms will be printed in RTN soon.

THE EMERGING CORRIDORS

Two issues ago we summarized Amtrak's long distance passenger train marketing plan as put forth in the corporation's recent Five-Year Plan. Now we turn to the rail corporation's plans for corridor trains, including what it has termed the "emerging corridors"--short distance routes to undergo development.

All the routes listed below, except where noted, are to be Amfleeted by the end of 1977, unless they already use Amfleet equipment.

CHICAGO-DETROIT: among most improved routes in system; ridership up 50% in 1975 with Turbos and continued growth in 1976. Projected 12% increase for FY 77 with an annual 11-12% rise thru 1981. Better speeds and station stops (Dearborn) in 1977 will help route, and specific promotions for business travel will be made, with fares strongly competitive. Amtrak considers this an emerging corridor and thus a candidate for increased train frequency. Track improvements to be completed 1977.

NEW YORK - ALBANY - MONTREAL: ridership weak but rising; 6-11% growth forecast over 5 years. To be Amfleeted soon. Major marketing efforts on NY-Albany and NY-Montreal. Intermediate markets small, but some summer potential may be developed between Albany and NY, and wintertime traffic potential north of Albany.

WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG: Growth of 43% projected over 5 years. Weekday traffic growth is self-generating due to excellent connection with Washington Metro system. Market weekend excursions to Harpers Ferry; moderate amount of advertising for the western end of the route.

CHICAGO-CARBONDALE: ridership has been declining; Amfleeting will reverse trend and cause 11% increase thru 1977 and further growth later as university and surrounding area grow. Excursions and tours will be used.

SAN DIEGO-LOS ANGELES: recent ridership uptrend. Ridership will remain fairly constant 1978-1981 unless schedules are shortened. Use excursion fares, short-stay tours, with local promotion.

CHICAGO-ST. LOUIS: extension of INTER-AMERICAN to Chicago shifts 7% of short distance ridership to long-distance category, but traffic will grow later consistent with growth in population areas. This is an emerging corridor; Chicago-Springfield has business travel potential.

OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD: "shopping excursion" programs will continue. Connection with BART at Richmond opens in 1977. Actively examining proposals to extend route to L.A. or Barstow, or to Sacramento; one or more of these plans might be implemented during the 5 years.

SEATTLE-VANCOUVER: try to halt moderate decline in ridership and stabilize it. Amfleeting expected to do this. Schedules to be re-examined, as well as fares.

CHICAGO-QUINCY: steady ridership growth projected, consistent with area's growth. This and all hub routes serving Chicago will be part of special promotion program.

CHICAGO-DUBUQUE: moderate growth projected. Try to establish stronger passenger growth pattern, with excursion programs for short-stay visitors to Chicago.

MINNEAPOLIS-SUPERIOR: insure a steady growth rate. Use excursion rates and tour programs, in line with route's connections to Chicago-Seattle trains.

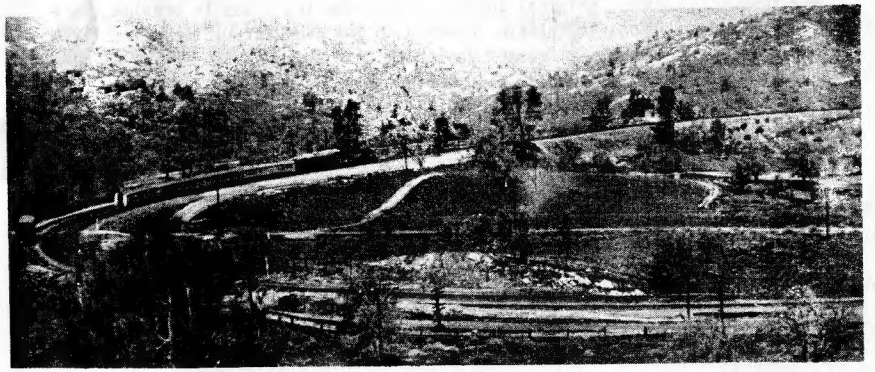
NEW YORK-NEWPORT NEWS: ridership of this new service less than expected, but had summer uptrend. Improved track connections in Richmond will reduce running time; excursion fares and extensive advertising will increase ridership in FY 77.

WASHINGTON-CINCINNATI: service had not begun at time of Plan's writing, and thus no projections yet made.

TURBOLINER ROUTES

CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE: predominantly end-point to end-point travel. 5-6% growth predicted as urban areas grow. Possible schedule alterations, but no increase in train frequency planned. Excursion fares and promotion for off-peak schedules.

CHICAGO-PORT HURON: 18% increase in 1977 and slightly less in 1978 with stabilization by 1979 expected.



Amtrak's study of extending the SAN JOAQUIN to Los Angeles or Barstow would if implemented mean routing the train over the Tehachapi Loop, as this 5-car pre-Amtrak SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT. Photo by Peter Putnam Bretz.

NEW YORK-BUFFALO-DETROIT: no substantial added service, but schedule changes in early 1977 with Turboliner introduction; one or two trains will be Amfleet. Running times improved over the 5 years with NY State track upgrading program for high-speed NY-Albany service and moderate (80mph) Albany-Buffalo service. Ridership increase expected with improved schedules and introduction of Turbos. Average trip length will grow moderately. Special promotion geared to Turbo introduction in early 1977; goal to increase ridership 50% by 1981.

CHICAGO-DETROIT: one of 3 daily roundtrips is Turbo; see summary above.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Congress authorized over $1.75 billion to modernize this long-neglected line, which has highest population density in the Amtrak system. Goal of legislation is to reduce Washington-Boston travel times. Service interruptions and lost revenue are likely in next several years, but on completion, passengers will travel downtown NY-Washington at average 84mph speed; route will be showplace of Amtrak system and the forerunner of similar rail service in the country's other urban corridors. (Ed. note: this work has been set back a year by DOT Sec'y Coleman's withholding of Amtrak funds).

By end of FY 77 all conventional cars and clocker equipment will be replaced by Amfleet. A limited number of Rohr Turboliners will be used for premium service Boston-NY pending electrification of that line. Metroliners will be upgraded; Metroliner food service will be upgraded and 3-hr NY-DC schedule on hourly frequency will be maintained. Future generation of high-speed electric trains will be developed; specifications are yet to be determined.

NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA: highest volume of passengers in Amtrak system. Ridership will show very modest growth 76-77 due to operating problems during track work. Now has substantial growth due to Amfleet introduction; growth rate of 5-7% forecast over 5 years if no significant service interruptions occur. Maintain strong competitive position against auto and air.

NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD: growth strong in 1976: 12% above 1975. Better schedules will produce significant growth in 1977, and 6-7% growth rate thereafter. Average trip length will improve. RDCs will continue in use thru 1981. Emphasize connections thru NY to other trains and to local commuter operations.

HARRISBURG-PHILADELPHIA: service changes contingent upon state recommendations. Modest growth rate expected to continue. Cost prohibits replacement of self-propelled electric cars.

BOSTON-WASHINGTON: Amfleet promotion will continue in 1977, and will stimulate growth well into 1978. Growth rate will moderate to 2% by 1979, with a more normal pattern thereafter; route will have long-term benefit of improved running times.

NEW YORK-HARRISBURG: original intent of this one train was to provide short-distance accommodations to relieve crowding on the BROADWAY LIMITED. Justification for this operation will remain dependent upon the presence of the BROADWAY service at or around its present NY departure time.

POTENTIAL EMERGING CORRIDORS

Altho the concentration of population and commerce in the Northeast is not duplicated elsewhere in the country, several regions appear to have the required population density and moderate intercity distances that allow for development of multiple rail services on certain route segments. Some examples: L.A.-San Diego; NY-Buffalo; Chicago-Milwaukee; Pittsburg-Detroit; Washington-Norfolk/Newport News; Springfield-NY; San Francisco-Sacramento; Chicago-Detroit/Cleveland; L.A.-San Francisco; Pittsburg-Philadelphia; Chicago-St. Louis; Seattle-Portland. The most promising prospects will be the subjects of a comprehensive research effort to determine the plans, commitments and procedures necessary to establish a viable corridor operation and develop it to the fullest extent possible.

Amtrak has promised publication of more details on corridor strategies later, and RTN will bring them to you as soon as they are available.

CARS & CONSISTS

*Southern Railway Carter Inauguration Special to Washington, Atlanta Jan 18: engines 6914, 6910, 6902, 6915; cars N&W 451 (dorm), 823, 3787, 819, 827, 816, 951, diners 3308 & 3311, 953, 3403, 2013, 3499, 2012, 2301, 2021, 2302, bus. car 1. SOUTHERN CRESCENT train 2, Atlanta Jan 18: engines 6913, 6900, 6909, 6908; cars 704 (bag dorm), 660, 822, 835, 662, 665, 845, 954, diner 3309, 2353, 832, 830, 3401, bus. car 18 used as sleeper, 2006 (to NY), 829 (to NY). Inauguration Special left Atlanta 6:25pm; arrived back Jan 22 at 9:30am, 30mins late.

*BLACK HAWK, train 371, Rockford IL Jan 31: engine 719 (P30); cars 21113, Amcafe 20026. First run since service suspended Jan 19.

*JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, train 51, Washington Jan 19: engine 712 (P30); cars 1362, 21805, 20209, 21844 (Amfleet cars normally used on the SHENANDOAH).

*NIAGARA RAINBOW, train 64, Rensselaer NY, Jan 19: Turboliner equipment, power car 156, coach 185, food service coach 186, coach 176, power coach 155.

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 440, Washington Jan 20: engine 4895 (GG1); cars 8358, 2153, 8352 counter-lounge used as coach, 5444, 6713 SP baggage car. 5 hrs late. Train 441, Harrisburg, Jan 15: engine 916 (GG1); cars 2555 "Steel City", 5256,3300. Train 41, lv Harrisburg Jan 15: engines 590, 606; cars 2607 "Pacific Cove", 2022 "Silver Rest", 5603, 5271, 3401, 8804-5 diners, 2402 "Bois de Sioux River", 2555, 5256, 1089.

*SILVER STAR, train 82, NY Jan 28: engine 954 (GG1); cars 1408, 2766 "Savannah", 3208 "Boulder Stream", 5472, 5440, 4596, 5477, 3802, 8012, 4554, 4434, 4459, 2773.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, Seattle Jan 26: engines BN 3322, Atk 345 (E8A), Atk 376 (F); cars 5231 (deadhead), 1155, 1503, 4508, 4850, 4857, 4510, 4867, dome 9370, 8034, 2751 "Palm Dome", 2713 "Pine Cavern." Train 14, Portland Jan 18: engine BN 1897; cars 1054, 1419, 4519, 4869, 4865, 4499, 4863, 4530, dome 9370, 8037, 2712 "Pine Brook", 2727 "Pine Pass" (engines 558 & 557 ran L.A.-Portland).

*PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, train 794, Seattle Jan 18: engine 215 (F40); cars 21175, 20220 Amdinette, 21174. Train 793, same Jan 26: engine 216; cars 20221, 21175.

*PANAMA LIMITED, train 59, Memphis Jan 16: engines 595, 588 (SDP's), 421 (E9A), 445 (E); heater car 1916, 1352, 1064, dome 9200 "Moonlight Dome", dome 9225, 8003, 5452, 5461, 5433, 6047, 5803, 3409. Same Jan 17: engines 720 (P30), 640 (SDP); heater car 1919, 1184, 2262 "Placid Haven", 2263 "Placid Lake", 8026 diner with frozen water pipes, 5664, 5649, 5807, 5262, dome 9560, 3339.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 31, Kansas City Jan 22: engines 621, 614 (SDP's); cars 2632 "Pacific Shore", 2788 "Berkeley County", 5264, 5421, 6071, 8085, 1180, 1306.

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, Houston Jan 2: engines 528 (in new paint), 566 (SDP's); cars 1155, 9901, 9947, 9959, 9906, 7513, 3393, 8031, 2711, 2371, 2626, 2367, SR 3407, 9252 "Silver Solarium" dome lounge sleeper.

Amtrak & the 4449

by Kenneth A. Maylath

Would a model train manufacturer produce an Amtrak-lettered steam engine? The idea would have been worth a chuckle not so long ago. But that was before the announcement of Amtrak's cross-country trek using ex-SP 4449 steam engine --returning it to its home in Portland, Oregon after a stint on the American Freedom Train. Not that 4449 is lettered Amtrak; but its red, white and blue color scheme is close enough to blend well with Amtrak's own equipment.

Saturday, Jan 15--Amtrak Station, Jacksonville, Florida. The CHAMPION arrives 5mins behind schedule after running up to 50 behind the previous evening in a Northeast snow and sleet storm. It's an overcast 50-degree day as a modest crowd and a couple of TV crews await the arrival of what's officially called the Amtrak Freedom Train. Due at 11:15, but a PA announcement says it won't arrive until a few minutes after noon. It's coming from Sanford, where it overnighted after Friday's run from Miami.

Sure enough, at noon a plume of white smoke and a deep whistle down the track, and the 4449 eases in. Slow advance ticket sales have caused Amtrak to cut the consist from 18 to 11 cars. The biggest problem was a limited time for promotion and ticket sales after plans were finalized. As a result, the passenger count wasn't much more than 200 at any time. But for those riding there's plenty of room which tends to promote a friendly, informal atmosphere.

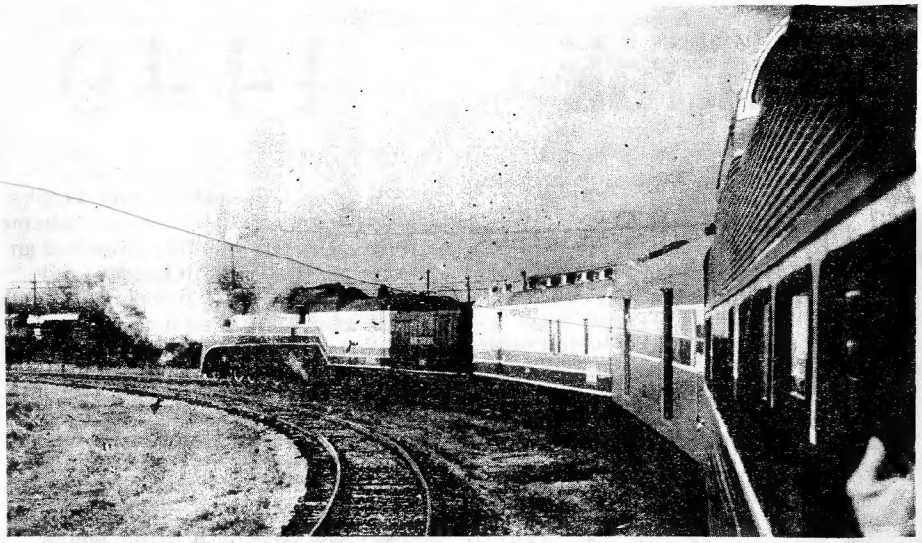
No getting around it--the 4449 is a beautiful piece of machinery. In the next couple of days it won't act like an over-35 year-old locomotive, thanks in part to the Freedom Train crew and their baggage-equipment car "Columbia" coupled on behind the tender and Southern Railway (green) auxiliary tender. Only the auxiliary tank breaks the red-white-and-blue color scheme. Amtrak has thoughtfully provided an open-door full-length baggage car, #1117, for the tape recordists and for those who don't mind a cool breeze.

Dome coach 9542 follows the baggage car for up-front viewing. Then coaches 6018, 6029, 6021, 6823, 6013, ex-UP lunch counter car 8399 for snack service, dome coach 9545 and former Wabash dome observation lounge 9310 (with tables upstairs and down). A fitting end to the train, even sporting a nicely lettered tail sign thanks to an Amtrak employee in Miami.

Some passengers are concluding their journeys here in the midst of day two. A few (aside from the railfan coterie) are going all the way. More board than detrain in Jacksonville. Rogers (E. M. Frimbo) Whitaker, railfan and RTN reader, is aboard for the entire journey and is interviewed by a TV crew during the stop.

Servicing takes 30mins and at 12:35 pm we're off--as I join an Amtrak public affairs man in the rear of the observation car for some lunch and conversation. There is talk of the trip so far and of revised plans for the continuation from Birmingham to Portland in April. The biggest problem thus far: a 1-hour freight delay the first day between Miami and Sanford.

We continue up the well-maintained SCL main toward Waycross. The sun begins to break thru the cloud cover as we click along at around 60, our maximum speed. That pace, with 11 cars and double tenders, doesn't tax the capabilities of the 4-8-4. This is what it was designed to do--move passenger consists (heavy ones if need be) at speed.



(Left) The Amtrak 4449 excursion train curves into the rail yards at Waycross, Georgia, to head West, on Jan 15.
(Below) The rear of the excursion train, with dome observation car 9310 bearing a special drumhead for the occasion. Photographed at Jacksonville on Jan 15. All photos by Ken Maylath.

At almost 2:30 we twist around the tight curve into Waycross as the sun glints off the side of the consist. A 10-min stop comes as a good-sized crowd watches the action--now underway again--west now on the line to Thomasville, Georgia--the next overnight stop--and Birmingham.

One thing has been learned during the first portion of the trip: hot box detectors and steam engines don't mix. Most of them sound the alarm when 4449 passes, meaning a 5- to 10-min delay for a check to make sure things are okay.

The route between Waycross and Montgomery isn't backwoods railroading, but neither is it a high-speed, high-density main. It is train order territory--no CTC, no signals. That means a 60mph maximum under federal regulations regardless of track condition. Maintenance seems adequate given the quality of the ride.

As we reach Valdosta it's nearly 4:30 and the sun is getting low in the sky. About 30 people board for the 42-mile hop to Thomasville. Things have been moving along nicely so far. True, we're now a couple of hours behind schedule thanks in part to the hot box devices, but no one minds very much. When it comes to the sound and smoke of 4449, the more the merrier so far as most passengers are concerned.

We're officially about 1:35 behind into Thomasville, end point of day two. Passengers continuing the next day and Amtrak people scatter to various lodings by taxi and school bus, mostly along the bypass three miles from downtown.

Sunday morning, Jan 16: The sun rises on a beautiful, cloudless but colder morning. It is the beginning of that Southern deep freeze which will bring snow flurries to the Miami suburbs and heavy losses to Florida's fruit and vegetable crop. However, the topic of conversation this morning isn't the weather but rather the derailment of the FLORIDIAN just north of Birmingham a few hours earlier. For one thing, it is known that some riders of the derailed train were heading south to join the steam excursion that morning. At the motel office a railroad official who rode our train yesterday is trying to arrange transportation to the derailment scene.

Back to the vintage railroad station in a motel courtesy car and an on-time departure at 9am for the third and final day of action behind 4449. There will be no meet with

(see page 14)

the FLORIDIAN/AUTO-TRAIN today, thanks to the derailment. The meet would have come on the way to the first stop of the day, at Dothan, Alabama. (The day before, the train was waiting in the hole for us more than 2 hours down.)

The terrain now is one of frequent curves and slight grades, but the locomotive takes it in stride. We make the hop within the scheduled 2 1/2-hour running time (only 1 1/2 hours on the clock because of the change to Central Time). A few minutes are available for more picture taking as a few more passengers board.

Now comes the longest uninterrupted segment of the trip--nearly 120 miles into the Alabama state capital of Montgomery--the end of SCL rails and the only major servicing stop for Sunday. The 3-hour-plus run provides plenty of time for conversation, lunch and enjoyment of the sounds from the baggage car. A hot box detector or two, but otherwise no problems. We reach the venerable old Montgomery station with its now rare trainshed about 30 minutes behind. Waiting are a couple of people from Chicago and a dozen or so from the Nashville NRHS chapter who weren't about to give up their 4449 ride just because of being on the FLORIDIAN when it went on the ground. They reached Montgomery on one of the 3 buses chartered by Amtrak to move the FLORIDIAN passengers after they were checked and treated at hospitals. Before the hour of watering and servicing is over, the tables near the piano at the rear of the observation car have become a center for story telling. There's even the Amtrak man who rode the northbound FLORIDIAN into Birmingham after arriving on the steam train at Thomasville only to find himself unexpectedly in the midst of arranging things in the wake of the accident.

On to L&N trackage now, with signals again. Within a couple of days the Peanut Special will arrive at Montgomery via freight-only L&N rails from New Orleans and lay over a few hours for servicing before heading via the SCL to Plains. I've had a chance to look at the special green "instant collector's item" menus for the train from Plains.

We're an hour behind out of Montgomery. That's a little more important now, since some passengers must return home that night via airline connections out of Birmingham. We move along nicely on fairly good track which continues to curve thru low hills and an occasional town. Temperatures are below freezing, meaning a frosty ride in the baggage car. The rest of the train has plenty of heat--too much if anything in a couple of the cars. That's no problem, given the generous amount of room available for the number aboard.

The 3 domes and the observation area are the favorites, of course, to watch the sun slip down under clear skies. Our 4449 journey comes to an end after a slight delay getting into the station tracks in Birmingham. The 5:45 arrival is soon enough for most airline connections and everyone is quickly headed for widely separated parts of the country. Complaints have been few, and many hope they can be aboard for at least part of the trip when it continues in April back to Portland.

Amtrak's first venture into steam operation hasn't been a huge patronage success, but the equipment, personnel and operational aspects have been fine. The trip has also served as a shakedown for the longer undertaking coming up soon. For the larger crowds almost certain to be aboard it should be a unique and unforgettable experience.

CASE FOR THE "GULF WIND"

RTN reported recently that a Mobile AL newspaper said that Amtrak had ordered a new study of the possibility of reviving New Orleans to Jacksonville FL passenger trains--the GULF WIND. An Amtrak study of 1974 concluded that a deficit of $1.5 million per year would be incurred on such a service. Apparently Gulf train supporters are hoping that Amtrak will name the route as its next experimental service.

In January the Jackson County (MS) Planning Commission issued its own study of the proposed service, which it terms the "missing link" in the rail passenger system in the South. The Commission began by taking Amtrak's earlier study, made in early spring of 1974 at the height of the energy crisis, when all America was seemingly calling for new rail service, and revising it to update it and change what it believed were errors in Amtrak's calculations.

The Commission claims that Amtrak underestimated the population of the areas the train would serve by as much as a quarter-million people; in addition the population has grown since the earlier study was made. The Commission tallies the present population living within 40 miles of stations on the proposed route as 3,973,836 people, located in seven Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas: New Orleans; Biloxi-Gulfport and Pascagoula-Moss Point in Mississippi; Mobile AL; Pensacola, Tallahassee, and Jacksonville FL. This larger population would put the estimated ridership per train at more than the 58 that Amtrak estimated (43.9% average load factor with 2 coaches and 1 sleeper). The Commission didn't settle on one single estimate of ridership, since it can be estimated several ways.

The choice of stations along the route was also criticized by the Commission. It felt that Amtrak had included too many stations--16--on the route, which led to high cost estimates. The Commission's own choice of stops, which are shown on the proposed timetable on the next page, totals 13. Amtrak had considered the following: New Orleans, Gulfport, Biloxi, Pascagoula, Mobile, Bay Minette, Atmore, Flomaton, Pensacola, Crestview, De Funiak Springs, Marianna, Panama City, Tallahassee, Chattahoochee, and Jacksonville. These points, from New Orleans east to Panama City, are on the L&N Railroad, while the last 3 are on the SCL--both Amtrak member railroads. In offering a revised list of station stops, the Commission noted that Amtrak had proposed stations in both Biloxi and Gulfport, which are contiguous cities with station facilities only 13 miles apart. It proposed instead to locate a new modular station near Edgewater Park, equidistant from the central business districts of both communities. It found that Amtrak's average spacing of stations was 38.56 miles apart; its own recommendation places them 47.5 miles apart. The Commission estimated an expense of $356,000 for preparing the station facilities for use. Jacksonville, which has a nes station, would need only a storage spur track added.

For train equipment, the Commission suggested Amfleet cars: one F40 locomotive, one baggage-mail car, 3 60-seat legrest Amcoaches, and one Amcafe car. The train would carry no sleepers, following the precedent set by the forthcoming Idaho train.

The Commission made three different financial estimates for the service, based upon three different levels of cost of operation per train mile. The best of these would bring a profit of $461,000 yearly; the second would net $8400 per year; and the third would show a deficit of $734,000 annually, less than the $1.5 million estimated earlier by Amtrak.

The Commission believes the route is worthy of inclusion in the Amtrak system because it (1) provides a Southern transcontinental route, (2) has a better operating cost than other experimental routes, (3) serves more major population centers not now served than other experimental routes, and (4) gives balanced transportation to the most rapidly growing market area in the country.

NEW ORLEANS – JACKSONVILLE TRAIN SERVICE

PROPOSED DAILY SCHEDULE AND STOPS

Mileage									
0			Lv. 7:45 P	(SMSA) New Orleans	Ar. 10:20 A				
57			Lv. 8:55 P	Bay St. Louis	Lv. 9:11 A	MINI-CORRIDOR	57	70	47
79		MINI-CORRIDOR	Lv. 9:22 P	(SMSA) Edgewater Park	Lv. 8:44 A		22	27	44
105			Lv. 9:54 P	(SMSA) Pascagoula	Lv. 8:14 A		26	32	43
145	60 MPH		Ar. 10:45 P	(SMSA) Mobile	Lv. 7:20 A		40	54	44
			Lv. 10:55 P		Ar. 7:10 A				
204	35 MPH		Lv. 12:20 A	Flomaton[2]	Lv. 5:45 A		59	85	42
248			Ar. 1:45 A	(SMSA) Pensacola	Lv. 4:20 A		44	85	29
			Lv. 1:50 A		Ar. 4:10 A				
298	40 MPH		Lv. 3:10 A	Crestview[1]	Lv. 2:55 A		50	80	38
374			Lv. 4:10 A	Cottondale[1]	Lv. 12:55 A		76	120	38
409			Ar. 5:55 A	Chattahoochee[3]	Lv. 12:10 A		35	45	47
			Lv. 7:05 A		Ar. 1:00 A				
452	60 MPH		Ar. 8:00 A	(SMSA) Tallahassee[1]	Lv. 12:05 A		43	55	48
			Lv. 8:10 A		Ar. 11:55 P				
558		MINI-CORRIDOR	Lv. 10:30 A	Lake City	Lv. 9:30 P	MINI-CORRIDOR	106	145	44
620			Ar. 11:50 A	(SMSA) Jacksonville	Lv. 8:00 P		62	80	48
	Maximum Permissive Speeds.	Total Elapsed Time (15:05)		Total Elapsed Time (15:20)			Miles Between Station	Time/ Min.	Speed/ MPH

(1) Flag Stop.
(2) Flag Stop and Crew Change Point.
(3) Flag Stop, Crew Change Point and Time Zone Change; EST-CST'.

MILEAGE/SPEEDLIMITS - 415 mi. @ 50 mph
161 mi. @ 40 mph
44 mi. @ 35 mph

MILEAGE 620
ELAPSED TIME 15:20 (MAX.)
Distance Between Stations 47.7 miles

AVG. SPEED 40.52 mph
No. of new stations 11
Speed Source: L & N / SCL Operating Timetabl

Courtesy of Jackson County Planning Commission

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE MOST FREQUENTLY mentioned concern in our mail these days is the question of what will happen to the best of existing Amtrak cars when re-equipping with bi-levels and Amfleet is complete. The dome cars especially, and the good sleepers are the subject of concern among rail supporters. Some suggest running bi-level cars with some conventional cars and domes at one end of the consist, as the SOUTHWEST LIMITED does. Retention of any existing cars would mean retrofitting them for electric head end power in place of steam heating. Would this be cheaper than purchasing new cars? We haven't seen any figures comparing the costs, but most observers believe it would. The loss of dome cars on American trains would be keenly felt, and we agree that every effort to retain them should be made.....

ORIGINAL DOME CAR, Amtrak car 9401 "Silver Dome" (originally "Silver Alchemy") was recently traded to Burlington Northern for a baggage car. The trade was made so the BN could donate it to a railroad historical group to be preserved for posterity..... SPEAKING OF DOMES, reader Buck Price writes regarding Peter Bretz's article on the SUNSET in the 2nd Dec issue, to inform us that there were originally 7 CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR dome observations. The one Peter did not refer to was "Silver Crescent", owned by the WP: "It was bought from the WP by Jolly Rancher Candies, in a northwest suburb of Denver. A few years ago it was there, with steam and air connected. It was coupled to an ex-CZ WP baggage car, which was all carpeted and converted into a modern kitchen. "Crescent's" interior looked about the same as when in CZ service, with music system working and the drumhead still on it. The candy factory is about 1½ miles from the Colorado RR Museum at Golden".....

* * *

AMTRAK'S FEBRUARY 15th timetables will not show slowed long-distance schedules as a result of speed restrictions on SDP40F locomotives, because Amtrak hopes that by Feb 28 the engineering group studying the problem will have reached some decision. (On Feb 3 the National Transportation Safety Board issued speed restrictions not only on the SDP40F but also on the P30 GE diesel engine, of 40mph on "curves of 1½° or greater which have certain deviations in track geometry." Both engines have 6-wheel trucks, and together they have been involved in 17 derailments since Jan 1974 which are suspect. The P30s were in two derailments in Mississippi involving the PANAMA LIMITED.) There will be some Northeast Corridor and New York State changes in the timetable, and the LONE STAR and SOUTHWEST LIMITED will run separately once more. In the Northeast, the COLONIAL is expected to have its schedule speeded up. Daily except Sat it will lv Washington at 5:30 pm and reach Newport News at 9:50pm; the Sat times are 8:45am and 1:05pm. Northbound the daily except Sun times are 6:20am from Newport News, with a 10:40am DC arrival; Sunday times are 11:05am and 3:25pm into DC. Boston-DC times for the train will vary from the present, generally slightly faster because of equipment being handled in a different Corridor time slot.....

THE APRIL DATE for Amtrak's continuation of the Freedom Train excursion to Portland has not been finalized. The most likely route that the train will take will be Southern Railway from Birmingham to Meridian, ICG to Jackson and New Orleans, and SP New Orleans-Los Angeles-Portland..... TWO BULLET TRAIN 130mph cars will be tested by Amtrak in the Corridor, Newsweek Magazine reported. Amtrak said however that the announcement is "very, very premature"; that not only the Japanese but also the Germans, Italians and French are anxious for Amtrak to try out their electric equipment. It will be about 2 years before Amtrak decides on what sort of car will become the "Metroliner II" that it wants by 1981 when the Corridor improvement and electrification is to be completed. And besides, Amtrak said, the article should have said 160mph trainsets.....

TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ADAMS granted NY Times reporters his first interview since taking office, and the Times reported on it Feb 6. The new Secretary indicated that his philosophy regarding Amtrak differs from that of Coleman--he wants the national passenger train network to be "perpetuated", even if the amount of service on certain lines has to be "adjusted." Adams cited environmental concerns in supporting rail, and the need for a transportation alternative for those unable to drive or fly. He called for patience with the subsidization problems of the present: "As the cost of energy goes even higher, alternatives to driving will be more favorable." He cited the need for more multi-modal transfer points. On the subject of money, he pointed out that the next two years will see the expiration both of the highway trust fund and the mass transit act money, and he is reserving judgment on national policy regarding these, tho he said he liked the idea of communities being able to use highway money for projects other than highways. Adams said he favors the 55mph speed limit and will oppose weight and size increases for trucks. He said he would like to raise the office of UMTA Administrator to Assistant Secretary rank. On the subject of Northeast Corridor improvement, Adams said that he is very anxious for it to begin as soon as possible (Coleman had delayed it since last spring by withholding funds to Amtrak)--"even if I have to go out myself with a pick and shovel." Former Deputy Secretary John Barnum has been replaced by Alan Butchman, Adams's former administrative assistant. The L.A. Tims reports that "several dozen" officialsfrom the previous administration have been given their walking papers by the new DOT people; and they have been "graciously" allowed 30 days to find new positions, and often allowed to continue use of their old office in the meantime, on orders from Secretary Adams.....

* * *

THE INTENSELY COLD weather in the Midwest and East continues as we move into the month of February. The same weather aberrations that are creating a drought here are bringing the Arctic chills to the area east of the Rockies. Buffalo NY has 150 inches of snow, four times the seasonal normal. No trains are running into the city--the LAKE SHORE is not operating, and the Empire Service terminates at Syracuse. Some of the trains annulled indefinitely (see last issue) are being reinstated: the BLACK HAWK resumed running on Jan 31, but was annulled again Feb 2. The BLUE WATER LIMITED resumed operation Jan 22. The SAINT CLAIR was to resume running Feb 3 for the first time since Jan 21. ConRail closed a whole section of track west of Pittsburgh Jan 28, forcing Amtrak to annul trains.....

WE STARE IN disbelief for hours at masses of bad news about Amtrak, that defy organization. Starting in December there was the BN embargo on Amtrak engines, the most severe winter weather in U.S. recorded history, Coleman, Greyhound, and in the press some of the most unflattering coverage that Amtrak has ever received. Could the BN be conspiring with Coleman and the highway lobby to do Amtrak in? This is the thesis that writer Carl Fowler entertains (see p. 5), but we are unconvinced. But one thing that impresses him impresses us also--all the while Amtrak is strangely silent about all these disasters. Perhaps the reason is that one positive factor that balances all the negative--the elevation of friendly people to high Dept. of Transportation posts. In this weirdest of seasons, one of the most difficult facts to assimilate into our brains is that suddenly the whole picture has flip-flopped, and the Administration is on the side of passenger trains instead of the opposite. Amtrak has never known a time before in its entire existence when the White House was not telling it to get lost. We don't know yet how to react to this event. One thing is certain--it will be very interesting to watch what will come of all this. But in the meantime we suspect that a reason for Amtrak's silence about the SDP40F engine problem is that it wants to await an official decision from the examining engineers, and doesn't want to prejudice the case by public discussion at this point. A lot of legal liability is at stake--depending on the outcome, General Motors could be held responsible for some design defect in the engines, or the railroads

could be blamed for poor track maintenance, or Amtrak could be held responsible somehow, or any combination of these. Clearly a lot is at stake--no less than the main long distance locomotive of Amtrak is under scrutiny, and we have seen that a forced slowdown of the engines can wreak havoc with the entire Amtrak system. A Minnesota reader writes: "The BN embargo is deplorable. However, two BN employees I talked with are not hopeful that the BN will lift it soon. They contend that BN has never been happy with Amtrak and now has a real golden opportunity to destroy Amtrak by ruining for all practical purposes the trains running over its system." Another tells us: "A BN employee told me that the embargo goes right to Menk's office, and that Menk has been perhaps a bit low in recent months following the death of a personal servant on his business car in Minneapolis station... So far Amtrak has not sought legal action, and Amtrak staff continue to wonder why nothing apparently is being done, and are told nothing..." These are the thoughts going thru rail observers' minds these days.....

* * *

"THE PRESS BLITZ" meanwhile (as one reader calls it) continues. The media seem to be bombarded with anti-Amtrak stories these days. Is the highway lobby running more scared than ever? It was incredible to see the Transportation Secretary in the last days of his tenure unleashing a mass of vituperation towards Amtrak, as if in frustration that he had been unable to alter the course of destiny. And accompanying it in the press were apparently planted articles decrying the money spent by the government on passenger trains. In the face of a new DOT that seeks to balance our transportation system, all those who have profited so enormously from the gross excesses of our unbalanced transportation system seemed to be rising up in fright that their past orgies may be coming to an end..... THE PANAMA LIMITED, train 59, on Jan 13 at 3:10pm, travelling at about 79mph near Ponchatoula LA, struck a pickup truck stalled on a crossing, fatally injuring one and seriously injuring another. The driver had leaped to safety but was struck and injured by the truck cab which was separated from the frame and hurled into a pond to the west side of the main line. The train was 4:20 late at the time and lost another 1¼ hours. Consist of the train was engines 627 & 635; cars 1184, 9202 "Sunlight Dome", 8055 "Silver Tureen", 5664, 5649, 5807, and 3339.....

* * *

NATIONAL VISITOR CENTER problem at Washington Union Station may be cleared up by legislation submitted to Congress by the DOT in mid-January. It would give the DOT control of the station and the Center. The DOT and the Interior Dept. would complete the parking garage and bus ramp and the replacement rail station..... GREYHOUND IS ASKING for a 12% fare increase because of a drop of income in 1976. This revenue loss may be Greyhound's motivation for publicly blaming their problems on Amtrak. But Amtrak has polled riders in corridors where it competes with Greyhound and found that very few riders said they would have taken a bus if the train weren't there. The most frequent response was that they would have driven; second that they would not have made the trip at all; third that they would have flown; and in last place was the bus alternative. Amtrak says it's not drawing passengers in any significant amounts away from buses..... TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ADAMS told a House subcommittee early in February that he would need more money for mass transit, and that he would seek to restore some highway and airport funds that the former administration wanted to cut out of the DOT budget.....

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA has asked Amtrak to inaugurate an Altoona to Pittsburgh train under partial state subsidy. The run, to use RDCs, would leave Altoona at 7:03am and reach Pittsburgh at 9:48am. Returning it would leave Pittsburgh at 5:15pm and arrive in Altoona at 8pm. Weekend departures would be later. An early 1977 inaugural is hoped for. Another 403-B service, from Harrisburg to Erie, has less chance of being started soon, altho PennDOT officials are pressing for it also. Amtrak said that in addition to these it has 403-B requests for Oakland-Sacramento CA , Chicago-Lansing-Detroit, and Chicago-Peoria pending and it cannot start them all up in a single year.....

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC is expected to be turned down by the ICC Feb 7 on its application to acquire parts of the Rock Island because of a technicality. Apparently the ICC doesn't want to make such a decision while the Rock is in bankruptcy.....

NEW INTERIOR SECRETARY Cecil Andrus said in early Feb that he favors prohibiting oil companies from getting into alternative energy sources such as coal or nuclear or solar power..... MORE WINTER NEWS: the N&W borrowed large rotary snowplows from the UP and SP due to the heavy snow east of the Rockies this season. The westbound BROADWAY LIMITED due in Chicago Feb 1 arrived at 11am on Feb 2, 24 hours late. On Jan 28 the eastbound SFZ was annulled Denver-Chicago dueto severe weather east of Omaha. Train 6 was cleaned and turned in Denver and heater car attached to lay overnight there and leave next day as train 5. And the winter produces some beauty too: a Colorado reader writes: "one night in late Jan three UP E units in A-B-A lashup on the SFZ passed 31st St. yard office and all the boilers erupted in towering clouds of steam, backlit by yard lights--a beautiful sight even for diesels." Buffalo NY is isolated by the heavy snow. A front page NY Times photo shows unemployed workers paid by federal funds to dig out tracks and switches there with picks and shovels. All non-essential auto driving has been banned in Buffalo. The PANAMA LIMITED has been picking up stranded motorists. The NORTH COAST was halted temporarily by snow drifts in North Dakota Jan 28. Illinois Governor Thompson was furious with Amtrak for annulling the state's 403-B trains, and Amtrak said they would be the first to be restored: "We are struggling the best we can during a crisis that was really created by an act of God." Seattle arrivals posted Jan 17: NORTH COAST 6:30 late, EMPIRE BUILDER 6:40 late. Police were called to subdue 200 angry SFZ passengers when their westbound train was halted and turned into a bus at Sparks NV Jan 9, running over 13 hrs late.....

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SOUTHERN RAILWAY ENGINE 6914, an E8, has been renamed "The Silver Streak." The railroad is hoping to acquire ex-T&P steam engine 610, a 2-10-4 for excursions this summer. SR closed down almost all of its operations Dec 24-25 to give employees a holiday--the first Christmas holiday in its history..... THE FLORIDIAN BEGAN running again Jan 31-Feb 14 as a Jacksonville-Miami local only. The train is expected to resume its full run Feb 15, but without a sleeper Jacksonville-Miami..... AMTRAK REPORTEDLY HIRED 38 people as railroad police in Baltimore to crack down on railroad vandalism, and the same is being done in Wilmington, Philadelphia, Trenton, New York, New Haven, Providence and Boston..... AMTRAK REPLIES TO an anonymous ad in our last issue: it doesn't use 24-seat diners on the LAKE SHORE, but 40-seat ex-NYC diners. If ridership exceeds 300, a second diner is added. Please, no more anonymous ads..... AMTRAK WILL DECIDE within the next 60 days on whether to move out of L'Enfant Plaza. New headquarter locations are being explored, including 400 North Capitol Street, and Crystal City, across the river in Virginia. In any event, the computer facilities will remain at Elephant Plaza.....

THE FRENCH LOCOMOTIVE to be tested by Amtrak (see photo last issue) arrived at Wilmington Jan 23..... AMTRAK'S PAUL REISTRUP talked with members of the Railroad Enthusiasts on Jan 1 and told them that he likes the idea of painting one GG1 loco in original PRR colors and perhaps eventually donating it to a museum. He said that Sec'y Brock Adams knows the transportation field and will hold Amtrak to task for its shortcomings, but won't be trying to kill it off at every step.....

THE IDAHO TRAIN startup will be May 1, it has been announced. Amtrak will use the UP depot in Salt Lake City, and will refurbish it at a cost of almost $\frac{1}{2}$ million. The train will connect eastbound with the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR there..... FORMER SENATOR TUNNEY'S West Coast rail study was not ready Jan 30, and may be extended to Apr 1978..... THE SILVER METEOR is nearly always on time in Florida, while the other two trains, on the ex-SAL route, are running consistently late.... WESTBOUND NIGHT OWL, train 67, stalled near Fairfield CT Jan 18, and 110 riders were bused on. A fallen catenary wire caused a loss of power..... RENO FUN TRAIN departures from S.F./Oakland this season are Jan 21 & 28, Feb 4, 11, 25; Mar 4, 18, 25; and Apr 1..... Mailing date of this issue: Feb 8, 1977.

Urban-Suburban Transit

A DISASTROUS WRECK on Chicago's CTA elevated loop in the heart of downtown occurred at 5 o'clock rush hour on Feb 4. A westbound Lake Street-Dan Ryan train struck the rear of a stopped train at Lake Street and Wabash, derailed and fell off the elevated tracks to the street below, with two cars hitting the pavement and two others dangling from the elevated structure. Eleven people were killed and about 200 injured, some seriously. A preliminary investigation suggested that human error was involved in the crash, as CTA Chairman James McDonough told the press that the motorman, who was seriously injured, had performed some unauthorized action.

CONRAIL'S COMMUTER TRAIN between Cleveland and Youngstown OH made its last runs on Jan 14. The fate of the runs was sealed last Nov 22 when the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority's Board voted 4-1 not to seek UMTA aid, which would have supported the trains 100% on a temporary basis. The only "yes" vote on the Board had come from OARP President Tom Pulsifer. The attempt to save ConRail trains 28 & 29 failed, despite a last-minute letter and telephone campaign by users.

ICC HEARINGS CONTINUED on the fate of the South Shore Line between Chicago and South Bend IN (see last issue). Testimony was taken from commuters, from Mayors of communities on the route, from the Environmental Protection Agency, from a number of other public figures, and an ICC environmental impact statement was discussed. The upshot of the hearings to date is that a massive amount of verbal support for retaining the Chessie System-owned line has been given, with many reasons for retention listed, ranging from avoidance of additional auto traffic and exhaust pollution in Chicago if service ends, to loss of jobs, inconvenience to riders, to interference with development of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, a new national park. The Mayor of Gary IN testified in strong terms that loss of the commuter line would bring "sociological and human havoc" to Gary workers and indicated that the railroad is "essential for the health and vitality of our city." The only Mayor to express guarded support for the line was the Mayor of Hammond IN, who said he did not object to the railroad's receiving a subsidy from local money, but put a higher priority on obtaining buses for his city--an area now without local bus service. The Chicago Sun-Times in an editorial called upon Indiana counties to come forth with matching funds that would permit an UMTA support at a level of 80%. Local areas would have to pay 20%, but a legal hassle makes it problematic for Indiana to do this. The Governor of Indiana has already pledged $3.5 million in state funds. At the hearings, the railroad was criticized for failing to take advantage of potential federal grants in the past. The ICC must make a decision concerning the service by Apr 8 or it can be dropped.

WASHINGTON'S METRO SYSTEM by the end of 1976 had racked up triple the ridership that was originally estimated. 4.25 million riders had used the subway since its late March opening--an average of 21,000 per day. The BART system has seen a daily ridership gain of 10,000 in 1976, to an average of 131,000 daily. And yet the tremendous successes of these two new subway systems are totally ignored in a major NY Times article by Virginia Fairweather (Feb 6), where the two systems are dismissed in a single sentence that alludes to "well publicized financial problems." The article, which points out that subways have gotten too expensive to finance, takes generally a Coleman-DOT view of mass transit problems.

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TRANSIT BRIEFS: BART plans to initiate weekend service in 1977, direct Richmond-Daly City runs, and increased Concord line service. The system has just installed bicycle lockers in many stations, with a $5/month rental fee.....

Dallas and Ft. Worth and in-between communities will study the feasibility of rail commuter service Dallas-Ft. Worth using existing rail lines.....

ConRail commuter line between Chicago and Valparaiso IN will be discontinued unless a commitment of local subsidies is made very soon.....

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

Does the BROADWAY really need five train crews between Harrisburg and Chicago? Does the CONNECTICUT YANKEE really need three crew changes between Springfield and Philadelphia? Do 4-car Metroliners which are run between New Haven and New York with 2-man crews (excluding motorman) really need three south of New York? Do one-car Silverliners really need two conductors, while one-car RDCs are run by one? Do we really need station switch engines and crews to set off a car in Kansas City when technically the road engine and crew can do it? These are the hard questions that someone has to look at. Each one of us who rides trains wants them to continue and prosper and agree with every argument on government subsidy, but can't we demand higher productivity?

Carleton F. Loucks
Hamden, Connecticut

It is certainly true that Amtrak's expenses are growing rapidly and that this is attracting more and more attention. I agree that, when compared with other modes of transportation, Amtrak's costs are low. This certainly needs to be pointed out to everyone. However, I am afraid that many people will ignore these facts and concentrate on the financial figures.

I do not believe, however, that the future has to be gloomy. There are many areas where Amtrak can cut costs, without lessening the quality of its service. Two examples are equipment and labor. Amtrak should limits its future car orders to the less expensive (overall) and more flexible single-level passenger cars. At the same time it should plan to rebuild at least 500 older passenger cars. Labor contracts should be immediately renegotiated in order to eliminate archaic work rules, and Amtrak should employ all people who run its trains. There are unquestionably other areas where Amtrak could reduce expenses and improve service. At this point Amtrak is too expensive, considering the service it provides.

Bert Barry
Saint Louis, Missouri

We have been repeatedly told that the Northeast Corridor is porfitable and that certain long distance trains were nearing breakeven points. With 5 years' operating experience, hopefully improvements would begin to bear fruit in increased efficiency and increasing patronage, thus reducing the loss, not increasing it. But now we are told that these routes are deep in the red. What has changed? Are the railroads overcharging Amtrak? Is Amtrak getting too heavy on the executive office front?

E. Everett Edwards
Abington, Pennsylvania

(Editor's note: Amtrak's Five Year Plan makes reference to "a ruinous inflation which multiplied costs far faster than revenues." The recession of 1975 also hurt Amtrak by leveling off the climbing ridership rate and cutting revenues. And we believe that our readers are absolutely right in pointing to the archaic work rules and relatively low productivity of Amtrak operating employees. Transportation is a labor-intensive business, which makes it essential for labor to be efficient. Perhaps now that there is no longer a conflict of philosophy between Congress and the Administration vis-a-vis rail redevelopment, it may be possible for the two to get together with Amtrak and put pressure on the labor unions for some semblance of sanity in work rules.

A reader inquires about the source of our statement in the Second Dec issue that the airline traveler pays only one-third of the costs of his transportation in his ticket, while the rail traveler pays 40 per cent. The airline figures were cited recently by former Transportation Secretary William Coleman in a press briefing (we haven't located the source in the transportation literature), and the rail figures came from Amtrak's 5-Year Plan. Incidentally, another interesting airline statistic is that only 20% of all Americans have ever used an airline.)

Express Ads

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RAILROADIANA AUCTION Sat. May 7 sponsored by Pottstown NRHS at the Sanatoga Fire Co. on route 422 East of Pottstown, PA. 400 lots of collectibles - Lanterns, Builder Plates, Timetables, Official Guides, etc. For info write Ted Maurer 1931 N. Charlotte St, Pottstown PA 19464. Inspection 9am, sale at 11am.

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RAIL FANTRIPS

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"Mississippi Queen" premier cruises from St. Louis; to Hannibal Apr 20-23/ to St. Paul Jul 9-17. Rates $219-$778. Amer. Ass'n of Railroaders Inc., 3422 Osage St., St. Louis MO 63118. Apr 1-3.

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RTN's Rail Fantrips dept. appears every-other-issue. One listing of a special trip is free, subject to our editing. Send full info to: Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.